1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[ARCHERS]

The candidates, Mbuti and villager, are led before the operator and are, if brave enough, circumcised standing up; otherwise, they are laid on the ground and held down. Next to every Lese youth stands a Pygmy boy, who is circumcised immediately after him. The two enter into a lasting bond of *karé* brotherhood. As the circumcision is completed, the Lese blows his signal horn, and the Mbuti his *seghe* pipe. The women in the village hear this and reply with a shout of joy at this sign that their sons have now become men. By this joint ceremony the *karé* stand in an even closer relationship to each other than do blood brothers.

Schebesta gives little account of the ensuing instruction, though he mentions the brutality with which he says the initiates are treated in the camp. Food is brought by the mothers and left nearby; the elders from the camp go to collect it. The boys are cut off from any comfort they might be given by their mothers. Instruction, "partly social, partly moral" (Schebesta, 1948, 481) may be given by the lineage head himself or by one of the other elders.

The major aspects of the *nkumbi*, from Schebesta's account, seem to be the formal transition from boyhood to manhood, the establishment of a *karé* relationship between Mbuti and villagers, and the introduction of all the initiates for the first time to a special trumpet that plays an important part in the men's secret

[P 179-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[ARCHERS]

[CP, 180-A]

society. Schebesta also mentions other instruments particularly associated with *nkumbi* (and the secret society) among the south Lese, namely: the bull-roarer (*pahudjuhudju* or *hudjuhudju*); a flute (*likuru*); a singing pot (*pengi*); and the large wooden trumpet (*asaragba*). The invitation to the Mbuti to take part in the *nkumbi* is one of the ways in which the villagers seek to maintain and extend their control over the Pygmies.

Schebesta concludes that we must distinguish two elements in the *nkumbi*: the villager element of initiation associated with circumcision and, quite distinct from it, the Pygmy element of initiation into the men's secret society (*tore*).

## Marriage

Schebesta (1948, 343) writes that it is difficult to determine which is the stronger, the interests of the hunting band or the interests and mutual affection of the two individuals concerned.

182 (D)

[ARCHERS]

The southern archers affirm that they always used to burn their corpses. Nowadays the burial takes place beside the hut of the deceased, and the corpse, covered with a cloth, is passed out through an opening made in the side of the hut. It is placed in a hole in the ground, covered with bark and earth. The hut is then pulled down over the tomb, and household utensils are added to the pile. Mourning *is* profound and sincere among men and women, but ritual dances of mourning, such as those practiced by villager women, are unknown.[1]

In "Die Bambuti Pygmäen vom Ituri" Schebesta (1948, 543) gives details of a funeral he attended in a southern Lese village, and of an archer funeral, and compares the two. The archer funeral was of an old Mbuti who died after a short attack of smallpox. Schebesta received the news at six o'clock the morning following the death. On reaching the camp he found the corpse laid out in a new cloth, inside the hut. Nearby crouched the widow and eldest daughter. All the womenfolk of the camp were gathered outside the hut, crying and moaning. The eldest son had gone to the village to inform his father's *karé* (p. 179), and within two hours returned with three villagers, wailing. Meanwhile the Pygmies had agreed that the grave should be dug beside the hut. The most promi-

[1] This statement, again, is totally contrary to my experience among both archers and net hunters.

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Mombu FO31
Lese



[ARCHERS]

[P-183-A]

P M 764 177

nent among the many archers who had hastened to attend the funeral took charge. He measured the corpse with his stick and drew the outline of the grave on the ground. His son, assisted by others, opened a grave, using pointed sticks, a hatchet, and a bush knife, and cleared the loosened earth with their hands. The crying

P [152]

of the women became louder, calling "*Afae!*" (father). A few women sat nearby, singing dirges. Not only the relatives mourned, but all present. With the help of the Lese *kari*, the

P M [608]

floor of the grave was covered with sticks, then leaves. The womenfolk hurried to the edge of the grave as the corpse, decorated only with an arm ring, was brought through a hole in the side of the hut and placed in the grave. The wailing

P [152]

reached its climax; the wife, children, and even the eldest grown son, threw themselves on the ground as the men began to fill in the grave. One man had to hold the eldest daughter to prevent her from throwing herself into the grave. The earth was stamped down, and the mourners moved away, women and children and some of the young men crying. One daughter remained near the grave as the house was pulled down to cover it (after the household goods had been removed).

Shortly after the burial some men went off hunting. By three o'clock the entire camp was deserted, and a new one had been built by evening.

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1
Mombu FO31
Lese



[ARCHERS]

Schebesta (1948, 545) cites this burial as evidence of band and lineal solidarity (e.g., the prominent part played by neighboring bands in the funeral), and of the importance of the *kari* relationship. Significant differences between the Mbuti and the Lese ceremonies were the absence, in the archer funeral, of the sacrifice of a hen over the grave, the absence of the official mourners in their clothes and white paint, of a goat offering, and above all of the absence of a long palaver, following the burial, to place the blame for the death. The question of blame did arise after the Mbuti burial described, but it was the Lese who were primarily interested. Nor, according to Schebesta, does a death have such far-reaching social consequences among the archers as among their villager neighbors.

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The relationship between the Efe archers and their villager neighbors is mentioned above. The two peoples are associated in a hereditary system, based on trade, strengthened by the

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[ARCHERS]

[P. 183-C]

*kari* relationship, and the practice of joint initiation and circumcision.

Among themselves the archers also practice a form of blood brotherhood, but the two major bonds are membership in the same economic local band and membership (with much wider extension) in the same secret society which the archers call *tori*. Schebesta (1948, 290) points out that a sense of tribal identity is totally lacking, that "clans" are dispersed and have neither political nor economic significance, and that even lineages, which in effect are the local hunting bands, are usually most properly viewed as economic entities. He gives neither genealogies nor any indication of any complex system of kinship terminology, nor any other evidence that kinship ties might be of extensive importance. There is even little evidence to support his allegation that the hunting band is a lineal entity. It appears throughout that the major unifying factor is one of common residence.

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[ARCHERS]

Costermans further agrees with Junker (1889–1891, vol. 3, 92) that many of the northern archers have recently themselves taken to a system of chieftainship. They lead their nomadic existence under the jurisdiction of a chief and in every way preserve their freedom under this jurisdiction. If there is any disagreement, however, they leave and place themselves under a neighboring chief. But not nearly enough information is given for any understanding of the structure of this "system."

P 622 184 178 621

Schebesta seems to stand between the two extremes with regard to the archers whom he studied. He stresses the economic dependency of the Mbuti on the villagers, and also, as does Putnam (1948), the personal aspect of the relationship. He does not agree with Costermans that the archers change their allegiance at the slightest provocation. He regards the *nkumbi*, with its creation of *kare* relationships between individual Mbuti and villagers, as a major factor in maintaining villager authority over the archers and rendering the latter dependent on their base neighbors.

P 2 439 177 57 [114]

P 2 [881] [608] •

[P. 185-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

613 larly a child, who is said always to respect his
614 patrilineal totem, respects his mother's totem
[608] when living with her group. A man also ob-
[784] serves the totemic restrictions of his *kuré*-
[262] brother. The totem is always taboo for the
[753] Mbuti. One may never eat it, and often not kill
[761] it, touch it, or even eat the food normally eaten
by the totemic species. Breach of taboo is believed to involve serious illness or death.

The relationship of the Mbuti to their totem is one not of fear but rather of respect, which Schebesta says is evidenced by their addressing it as "father" or "grandfather," and by the belief that the totem animal gave birth to the first member of the lineal group observing that totem.

[778] To this belief that the clan ancestor descended from the totem is allied the belief that on death the Mbuti is transformed into his totem. Schebesta finds it difficult to reconcile this with his analysis of Mbuti religion, and to see just which vital principle it is that becomes the totem. Connected with this difficulty is the [761] all-important belief in *megbe*, the vital force [778] emanating from the totem and immanent, but in different degrees, in all human beings.

Schebesta cites no individual or sex totems. As he sees it, totemism follows strictly lineage lines.

## Magic

761 778 Schebesta finds the link between the religious
[P. 192-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FC4 Pygmies FC4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]
[P.217-A]

881 [535] taught to the *elima* initiates. In one such dance witnessed by Mrs. Putnam, the girls held arrows and cut one another, and the women struck them with whips.

There is no information from the Putnam material as to any particular ceremony to mark the end of the *elima* (but see Turnbull, 1960a, 198 ff.).

### Initiation: *nkumbi*

Putnam's notes on the initiation of boys concern a net-hunting band and are particularly interesting, as they describe an initiation that occurred in the Bira village of Kokonvange in 1935, 14 years before Schebesta witnessed an initiation among the same group. It is significant that Putnam makes no mention of *karé* brotherhood between Pygmy and village boys.

881 608

For male initiation among the particular Epulu net hunters we are dealing with, I have only my own field notes,[1] and here again there is no mention of *karé* brotherhood (Turnbull, 1957). The full details of the ceremony do not concern us, as they vary from one village to another. It is important, however, to compare the relationship between the net-hunting Mbuti and the Bira villagers with that between the archers and the Lese, with regard to initiation.

[184]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

## [NET HUNTERS]

88] The first *nkumbi* of which I saw something
114 was in 1951 at the village of Effundi Somali. I
• 608 saw only a part and the final closing ceremony. Although I may well have missed much detail, it is unlikely that I would have missed anything of the nature of a *kare* relationship had one existed. There was certainly no sign of it. The next *nkumbi*, which took place in 1954 at Camp Putnam, was exceptional in that no village boys of the right age were available, so only Mbuti boys were initiated. Thus, there was no question of *kare* relationship between them and villagers, but also, during the entire course of the *nkumbi*, I heard no mention of it. This, together with Putnam's own silence on the subject, would seem to indicate that this relationship is either not so widespread or not so important as Schebesta assumes.

881 The peculiar circumstances of the 1954 *nkumbi* are given briefly here. Though exceptional, they contain some interesting points for

[114] [1] These covered my visits to the Ituri in 1951 and 1954-1955 only.

[P 217-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

A net-hunting camp, always larger than that of archers, may not only be comprised of two or more different lineages but will also nearly always include a number of visitors who may originally have come to visit female relatives and who, for one reason or another, settled permanently. Putnam also mentions the frequency of adoption and foster-parenthood. While he says an Mbuti will never knowingly marry another related to him on either side (he does not give the degree of relationship), he has no qualms when only social parenthood is involved. 621 582 597 608 582

A further advantage to marriage within the band is that it does not immediately upset the economic balance, so provides a loophole in the usual requirements of exchange marriage. Putnam does not say, however, exactly what the economic status is in the band of resident alien families or of the offspring resulting from intermarriage between them and other band members. From what can be observed and from cases cited, common residence seems to be the most significant factor. 621 58 [391]

[P 220-C]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[NET HUNTERS]

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The relationship between the net-hunting band, or between individual members of it, and village patrons is dealt with separately. It has already been mentioned that Putnam speaks of its current foundation in trade, and of how the joint *nkumói*, unlike that of the archers, seems not to have the same significance for villager and Mbuti. For the villager it is a tribal initiation in its usual sense and with its usual implications; for the Mbuti the *nkumói* is a means of acquiring status in an alien community. It does not seem to initiate both into identical social or religious associations, such as the *tord* society described by Schebesta (1952, 278).

Also, there is no evidence of blood brotherhood or of a *karé* relationship between villagers and net hunters. When we deal with religious associations among the net hunters, we deal with exclusively Mbuti associations. This is not to deny that a close relationship exists between an Mbuti and his villager patron, which, in fact, Putnam stresses; nor does it deny the fact that Mbuti may be invited to take part in the meetings of villager associations, and that villagers may conversely be invited to take part in the meetings of Mbuti associations (though information on joint meetings is lacking). All our material deals with exclusive meetings of the *elima* and *molimo*, as held by the Mbuti women and men, respectively.

Information on the *elima* is scant; there is no evidence of any ritual other than the singing of

[P 223 - D]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 224-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[p. 246-C]

Another very striking difference between the archers and the net hunters concerns the initiation of boys. As this is treated more fully below (p. 252), we only indicate here the fact of the total absence of any *karé* brotherhood between Pygmy and villager initiates among the net hunters. Schebesta, on the other hand, places great importance on this pact for his archers, probably because of his insistence (1952, 281) on the fact that the *nkumbi* initiation is an initiation into the religious association of *karé* for both Mbuti and villagers. This is denied by Costermans (1938) for the archers and is contradicted by my own experience among the net hunters. In any case, if there is a difference between the two groups over the significance of *nkumbi* initiation (and it may well be only a difference of interpretation rather than of fact), it does not seem directly related to any difference in hunting technique.

Similarly, with marriage, separation, death, funerals, childbirth, and other occasions with ritual connections, such difference as exists in the two accounts seems to be associated more directly with prevailing differences in villager custom rather than with any inherent differences in the Mbuti communities. This, and the nature and function of the closed associations, are more properly the subject of discussion of the Mbuti-villager relationship rather than the difference between net hunters and archers, which is our main concern here.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

of this association is not clear from his various accounts, but he is emphatic that it is closely connected with religious belief and practice. If so, then he would be perfectly justified in stating, as he does (Schebesta, 1952, 278), that nothing has made the Mbuti so dependent on the villager as the *nkumbi*. It would all fall neatly into the picture he gives, or tries to give, of a clear-cut symbiotic relationship between the two peoples.

Schebesta (1952) describes initiation for the net hunters. All that he says would be confirmed by casual observation of the practice of *nkumbi* in the Epulu District, among the net hunters and their Bira neighbors. As may be seen in the survey, however, there is one striking difference between the account by Putnam and that by Schebesta, and that is the lack in Putnam's description of any institution such as *karé* brotherhood. Apart from this, from Putnam's detailed account of the 1935–1936 *nkumbi* at Kokonyange and from my own observations of the *nkumbi* at Effundi Somali's village (near Epulu) in 1951, there would be nothing to contradict Schebesta's fact or theory. The Pygmy boys appear to go through the *nkumbi* on equal terms with the villager boys, except that the ceremony, instruction, and the camp itself are run entirely by the villagers and according to a custom that is generally acknowledged to be of villager (probably Bira) origin.

[P 252-B]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4 ●
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1



tions, even in the strictest village context, but it is outweighed by what at first seems little more than a lively desire to have all the advantages of village life with none of the disadvantages. Again, it is only through an examination of the interrelationship of the institutions adopted by the Mbuti, and their relationship with the indigenous Mbuti social system, that we can arrive at any true understanding of the apparent process of acculturation.

The attempt by the villagers to assert supernatural control is structurally the most significant, for it involves elements with which the Mbuti have no institutionalized means of dealing. Political pressure the Mbuti can counter by changing allegiance; economic pressure can also be countered, by reverting to the always available pure hunting and gathering economy; as we shall see in the next section, pressure through absorption into the village kinship system is repelled quite simply by the maintenance of an opposed kinship system. However, the Mbuti have no magic with which to counter magic, no witchcraft or sorcery with which to counter witchcraft and sorcery. They do have belief with which to counter belief, but it is part of the belief of both Mbuti and villagers that in a war between the gods, no man can safely predict the outcome. It is in this situation that the villagers do manage to effect some extent of control, but it is also in this context that they come up against the ultimate bedrock of opposition.

Let us look at the various ways in which the magico-religious life of the villagers impinges upon that of the Mbuti, and the extent to which it exerts some measure of control over the hunters and gatherers. Fully recognizing that a clear division of the subject matter is difficult, if not impossible, to make, we nonetheless have to attempt such a division for the purposes of discussion. There is a great deal of overlapping, but nonetheless at the extremes, in this case, the division used here between magic and religion is legitimate.

By *magic* I refer to activities involving, on the part of the African, villager or Mbuti, a conviction in the pragmatic relationship between a cause and an effect which, in terms of Western science, is not demonstrable. The term in its usual sense has meaning only as far as we are concerned, for as far as the Africans here are concerned, magical activities are as scientifically valid as any other. They may not always be able to explain the exact way in which the effect is related to the cause, any more than everyone who drives a motorcar can explain the mechanism. Indeed, the corresponding term "medicine"

2: Turnbull F-6 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

[P.63]

CHAPTER 6

# Village Religion

## NKUMBI

Both villagers and Mbuti have notions concerning spirits and spiritual intervention, and associated religious systems. Once again, however, even where the facts coincide, the systems do not. One of the major differences is the lack of ritual ceremony among the Mbuti and the importance of it among the villagers. Thus, though manhood is every bit as important to the Mbuti as to the villagers, there is no formal Mbuti initiation ritual. And although marriage is considered just as sacred, and is recognized by the Mbuti as having profound social implications, it takes place in the forest in an apparently utterly casual manner without any ceremony or ritual joining of the boy and girl or of their families. The ritual attitude of Mbuti and villagers toward death again is totally different.

But in the lack of ceremony the villagers once again see a chance for acting as intermediaries, as though this made them indispensable. The Mbuti are continually being subjected to one or another ritual ceremony at the hands of the villagers, even when the affair is entirely domestic and apparently does not in any way directly concern the villagers.

According to the notion of hereditary ownership, of course, the villagers also have a responsibility, and by virtually assimilating or, better, adopting the Mbuti into the villager tribe they are obliged to adopt them also into the religious system. The parallel kinship system, while never opening the way to complete integration, nonetheless demands an extension of the parallelism in all directions. The villagers have no qualms about this, and it is certainly no indication of friendly intimacy, for in this way they hope to secure the inferior status of the Mbuti not only in the present but also in the afterlife. At the same time the villagers believe they have found another source of control over their wayward servants.

2i Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



Of all the various *rites de passage* practiced by the villagers, and to which they are forced to introduce the Mbuti, none probably is so important as the *nkumbi* initiation of the boys into manhood. Among the Bantu tribes this is practiced with circumcision, among the Sudanic it is without circumcision, though there is a tendency among some Sudanic tribes situated close to the Bantu, such as the Lesé bordering on the Bira, to adopt the custom, one village at a time.

The major purpose of the *nkumbi*, as stated by the tribes that practice it (I refer mainly to the Forest Bira here), is to fit the youths as men, to make them men in the eyes of the ancestors. A boy who does not undergo the *nkumbi* is denied access to the ancestors after death, and during his life has the status of a child. Boys between the ages of eight and twelve, generally between nine and eleven, are eligible for the ceremony, which now takes place once every three years and lasts for two or more months. The traditional time element has been completely upset by the administration, which, together with the missionaries, has tried to discourage the whole institution. But the *nkumbi* initiation has remained as the only way to achieve adult status within the tribe. I have seen an entire *nkumbi* ceremony, including circumcision, held for a boy who died just prior to being initiated.

Effectively the *nkumbi* also unites a few neighboring villages as a single political unit, and affords an opportunity though the system of *kavi* blood brotherhood, of cementing specific political bonds. It also effectively unites those tribes who practice circumcision in opposition to those who do not practice it, and it determines certain lines of marriage prohibition.

One such line, of course, divides the circumcised from the uncircumcised, and theoretically marriage between a Bira and a Lesé would be unthinkable. The only cases known to me allegedly happened during war, captive women being taken as wives. But equally theoretically these prohibitions should apply to the Mbuti who, according to the practice of their *kpara*, not having any of their own, either do or do not suffer circumcision at village hands. As we shall see, however, forest territorial organization is no respecter of village tribalism, and band composition is fluid, to say the least. Consequently, in any one band one can by no means be sure that all the men are circumcised, and the question is never raised. Further than that, there is no objection to marriage, among the Mbuti, between a family whose *kpara* circumcises and one whose *kpara* does not. Such marriages would cer-

Jh Turnbull E-5 (1951-1956) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1



tainly not be countenanced by the *kpara* concerned. This is only one indication of the lack of respect with which the Mbuti view the *nkumbi*, and it is important that this be understood at the outset. The structural implications of the *nkumbi* as they apply to the villagers in so way apply to the Mbuti. I had graphic evidence of this when following recently initiated Mbuti youths back to their forest hunting camp at the conclusion of the two-month ceremony. They had just been acclaimed as men by the villagers, and allowed to take their place as men in the village *baraza*, or meeting place. But their first act on entering the hunting camp was to sit on the laps of their mothers in an indication that they still considered themselves as children in the forest world. I might further mention that the Mbuti, who in the forest consecrate every activity of major importance with a special type of song, have no song whatsoever for the occasion of the *nkumbi*. Further arguments are given elsewhere (Turnbull, 1957[2]). Here we are concerned with villager attempts to secure control, and it is only necessary to indicate the two different attitudes to the *nkumbi*, and its evidently different significance for the Mbuti in the forest world.

However the Mbuti might deny the village attitude to the *nkumbi*, and the villagers are aware that such denial does take place, the villagers nonetheless see a number of advantages accruing to them in their admission of the Mbuti to the tribal initiation ceremony.

First, as the *nkumbi* fits a youth to go to the ancestors after death, the ceremony serves as an introduction of the Mbuti to the afterworld of the village. By undergoing the *nkumbi* they equally are fitted to go, after death, to the world of the village ancestors. But it is made plain throughout that the status relationship remains unchanged. Mbuti and village boys are circumcised alternately on the day of the cutting, which opens the ceremony proper. The Mbuti boy is generally sent first—"to clean the knife"—and throughout he is made, in innumerable ways, to recognize that in village eyes he is inferior to the village boys.

## KARÉ

The pairs of boys, one Mbuti and one villager, whose blood has been allowed to mingle, are called *karé*. The degree of formality with which the *karé* relationship is solemnized varies considerably from village to village, and depends to some extent upon the proportion of Mbuti

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1956) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



to village boys. In some cases the Mbuti's *kpara* may choose him as *karé* to his own son, and in other cases he may see some advantage in having his Mbuti form a *karé* pact with another villager, as this forms an economic and political link, then, between the two villagers. It seems that, generally, *karé* brotherhood is formed between Mbuti and their *kpara's* patrikin, however. It is believed that this places the two in an indissoluble politico-economic relationship for the rest of their lives, a relationship of subordination as far as the Mbuti is concerned, and one that will persist into the afterlife of the same individuals.

The villager concepts of afterlife are not clearly defined, but it is accepted without question that individuals continue to exist after death and may, if qualified by initiation and by adherence throughout life to the tribal code of behavior, join the ancestors, who live together much as they did in the present world, and continue to concern themselves with the present world. It is also accepted without question that there must be Mbuti in the afterworld, just as there are in the present. If one asks why must there be Mbuti, the invariable answer is in terms of the economic dependence of the villagers upon the Mbuti in the present world, the assumption being that the same needs will exist in the afterworld. But the economic relationship is the most easily expressed and recognized, however mistakenly, and is not necessarily therefore the most important. The political relationship is also recognized, though not quite so easily expressed because of the greater incompatibility of the systems of the two peoples. But there is also a ritual relationship which is certainly as powerful as the others, if not more so, and it is just as much a part of the *karé* pact as are the economic and political aspects.

*Karé* partners are expected to trade with each other, though not necessarily exclusively. This allows for the formation of *karé* brotherhood between individuals who are not in a *kpara*/Mbuti relationship, and is an attempt on the part of the villager to regularize the situation should his Mbuti join a band trading with a neighboring village. To have a *kpara* in one village and a *karé* in another, strategically chosen, is considered equally advantageous by Mbuti and villager. As far as the Mbuti is concerned it provides him with two groups of people who feel under some kind of an obligation toward him, and who need him. As far as the *kpara* is concerned it gives him someone he can effectively claim against should his Mbuti decide to trade in that direction. As far as the villager *karé* is concerned it is another Mbuti

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1



to his credit, increasing his prestige and also somewhat increasing his trading opportunities. The trade is mainly thought of in terms of meat and labor on the side of the Mbuti, village foods, clothes and tobacco on the side of the villager. A fairly friendly relationship does sometimes develop between two *karé*, who, regardless of the status differentiation, undergo the whole *nkumbi* together, suffering the same ordeals side by side, and are perhaps more united by age than they are separated by the status differentiation.

The political aspects of *karé* brotherhood reinforce the economics, not only serving as a basis for compensation against a migrant Mbuti, but also for extending the *karé* relationship to link the Mbuti's *kpara* with the village boy's father. The relationship is primarily between individuals, but it nonetheless creates felt obligations between the families involved, and one family of villagers may invoke the help of another family in a dispute, through an Mbuti *karé* link. The kinship ramifications of *karé* brotherhood are still far from clear from the village point of view, and it seems that the introduction of the Mbuti to the system may have somewhat disorganized the traditional system. For the Mbuti there is no connection between *karé* and kinship, and effectively there can be none among the villagers. If there were, then the formation of a *karé* tie between *kpara* and their own Mbuti would be incestuous, and the formation of such ties with unrelated families, conceived of as a sibling relationship, would effectively prohibit marriage in that direction and create an impossibly confused dual kinship system. Yet *karé* do refer to each other sometimes as "brother," and take advantage of their thus extended kinship relations.

The religious aspects of *karé* brotherhood are far less easy to define, and far less easy for the investigator to determine because they are seldom, if ever, discussed. I have never heard such a discussion, unless I instigated it, except on the occasion of the death of a villager. On the death of an Mbuti it is generally only the other aspects of the *karé* relationship that are discussed, involving liability for funerary expenses, compensation for outstanding obligations, divination of the cause of death. But when a villager dies the Mbuti *karé* is introduced into the heart of the funerary ritual, having to perform divers functions such as beating the villager's wives, leading an attack upon all close kin of the deceased, conveniently clustered together for the purpose, "to drive away evil," as the villagers explained it among themselves and to me. The Mbuti *karé* is also made responsible for providing certain foods for the deceased and, I believe, certain herbs

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1



with which the body of the villager is treated before burial. Owing to my somewhat peripheral relationship with the villagers I was not allowed to witness the more intimate rituals when the *karé* Mbuti was closeted with the deceased on one occasion for about three hours, on another occasion for one hour. Nor was I able to elicit much from the Mbuti, who said that they knew nothing about it, and only did what they were told to do by the villagers. When asked what that was, they repeated the above information, which was as much as I had gathered from the villagers, and no more except a few colorful and imaginative details about the appearance and odor of the corpse. This being clearly something better investigated from the villager side, I did not press the matter. It seems sufficiently well established, however, that the ritual connection between *karé* is considerable as seen by the villagers, and this was borne out on one occasion when an important Bira noble died and the entire funeral ceremony, including the burial, was held up for a day and a half because of the non-appearance of the dead man's Mbuti *karé*. On this occasion the Mbuti eventually arrived on the run carrying a spear, loudly shouting his complaints at being brought from the forest for such stupidity (again the term *mbafu*). There were several hundred villagers assembled, and the Mbuti ran through them to the compound of the deceased. He evidently knew in advance what was expected, and broke his way in to the closed hut where the widows were wailing. There was great concern among the villagers because he took his spear with him, and they said he might kill the women, but they did nothing to prevent him. Happily there was a full complement of widows at the subsequent burial.

The villagers recognize that they cannot force the Mbuti *karé* to fulfill their obligations by political or economic pressure, but they now have another weapon. By the act of ritual circumcision, according to tribal lore, the Mbuti are placed in a direct relationship with the tribal village ancestors, and by the *karé* bond each Mbuti is placed in a direct relationship with the protective spirits that look after the welfare of their respective individual villager partners. Every step of the *nkumbi* reinforces the authority of the tribal ancestors, through the supernatural powers at their disposal, over the Mbuti as well as over the villager initiates. Failure to fulfill "kinship" or *karé* obligations on the part of the Mbuti cannot be dealt with by the legal mechanisms available to the villagers, but it can now be countered by supernatural sanctions. Villager lore defines the Mbuti responsibili-

2: Turnbull E-6 (1951-1960) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
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ultimate if not immediate control. It is more difficult to see what the Mbuti get out of it, except for certain economic advantages which are meant to be reciprocal. Looking at it briefly from the Mbuti point of view, however, we see that the advantages are perhaps more real than those accruing to the villagers. For the villagers are bound by their own sanctions, and therefore the Mbuti can make demands of his *kuré* with reasonable assurance that they will be met. Also, he can now expect a succession of relatively lavish ceremonies to be prepared for him as he goes through life, at the expense of his *kuré* and *kpura*. The feasting involved may seem a trivial gain for the Mbuti, but in fact it is one of their major sources of entertainment and relaxation. The *nkumbi* extends the Mbuti's economic and political horizons just as it does those of the villagers, and the Mbuti know how to reap the advantages, just as they know how to avoid most of the disadvantages. This avoidance in fact forms one of the important features of the over-all structure of their society.

One final advantage that should be mentioned, though its importance is perhaps more personal than social, is that only by participation in the *nkumbi*, or its equivalent among tribes with other forms of initiation into manhood, can the Mbuti become a man in the eyes of the villagers. There is a strongly paternalistic attitude held by villagers toward their Mbuti that is resented by the hunters, who consider themselves more manly than the villagers. The *nkumbi* at least offers them an opportunity for proving their manliness to the villagers, and it sometimes develops into a contest between the Mbuti and the village initiates. And only by participation in the *nkumbi* can the Mbuti acquire the right to be addressed as adults, admitted to the adult *banza*, and accorded other adult privileges when in the village.

## ELIMA

The villagers do not attempt to exert supernatural control through the women, as they do through the men. While the Mbuti men have nothing comparable to the *nkumbi* initiation of the villagers, the Mbuti women, in the forest world, do have a recognizable and formal way of acknowledging the puberty of a girl. They give it the same name as the villagers (the Bira call it *elima*, the Lesé *peipa*) and in its outer form it appears roughly similar; the occasion at least is the same,

2: Turnbull B-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1



craft or to a breach of marital taboos, as indeed are any disasters, natural or unnatural, that befall the couple. The Mbuti, not having any traditional means of divination, are considered by the villagers to be dependent on them for help, though a few Mbuti have learned the art and become quite highly respected by the villagers. Sometimes if villagers come to hear of a marital dispute within a band, they will try to settle it by reference to divination, and if so the Mbuti appear to accept the settlement without question, in the village, but in no way allow it to impinge upon the reality of the situation in the forest. So once again the only dependency that exists is in the minds of the villagers.

## DEATH

Even when it comes to the greatest crisis of all, death, the Mbuti seem to accept all the externals of village ritual but none of the implications. The invariable accusation of witchcraft and the equally invariable mention of supernatural sanctions as an alternative cause of death are made to remind the Mbuti not to falter in fulfilling their obligations to their *kpara*. Village insistence upon the unnatural causes of death serves to sow enough seeds of doubt in the mind of the Mbuti to cause at least momentary fear.

The actual ritual of burial is conducted under strict village supervision, the necessary payments being made by the *kpara*. The *kpara* and his family, as well as many other villagers, attend personally in the procession to the grave, and the *kpara* is almost certain to take a prominent part in the subsequent discussion as to the cause of the death and be present at the divination, if one is held. But whereas the Mbuti generally subject themselves to village ritual with the best of grace, they become quickly impatient following the burial of the dead and sometimes simply walk out of the *baraza* where the cause of death is being determined, leaving it entirely to the villagers to decide whatever pleases them. The village preoccupation with death and its unnatural causes disquiets the Mbuti, and when an Mbuti dies in a village there is frequently voiced suspicion that somehow the village is responsible; maybe one of the old curses is at work, perhaps a neglected *kpara* is employing a sorcerer to seek revenge, or, more likely, it is impersonally simply the village itself that caused the death.

Among themselves the Mbuti do not bother to settle the question, if they ask it, but if they feel that the village is to blame in some un-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



we have already seen that in place of system and control there is, apparently, only flux and instability that militate *against* system and control.

By flux I refer to the fact that the Mbuti appear to adopt village institutions but not the village system of interrelationships. In this way there is a disconnectedness in the village context of the Mbuti that enables both sides to refer to whichever institution is convenient at the moment to establish a relationship of the moment. Thus an Mbuti may be asked to help one villager on the ground of their *karé* relationship, and expected by another to help because of the hereditary *kpara* relationship. Considerations of simple economic exchange between the same Mbuti and still other villagers may override either of the above considerations at another moment. Thus the Mbuti has a number of possible ways in which he can link himself with the village and the villagers, at different and distinct times. The converse also applies, and if a villager finds his hereditary claims ineffective he may call on other Mbuti because of the *karé* relationship, and so forth.

In view of the nomadic nature of the hunting band and, as we shall see, of its composition, this "system" of flux is the only one that could possibly pertain. But it leads inevitably to instability because of the consequent lack of any one system of control. In the same way that the Mbuti can hop from one conflicting set of relationships to another, so he can hop from one system of control to another. By Mbuti rejection of the total village system and by what proves to be an opposition of a totally different set of values, the villager ultimately is denied virtually all control, and the Mbuti similarly is denied any absolute security in his relationships with the villagers.

However, the loss of control is more serious to the villagers than is the loss of security to the Mbuti, and it is also more complete, for the villagers are themselves bound by the supernatural sanctions through which they vainly attempt to impose control upon the Mbuti. The whole situation is incompatible with the notion of economic interdependence, yet there is no denying the actual relationship between the two groups of people. Nor can one deny that within a framework of flux and instability, the relationship is persistent, so there must be some system. If that system is so evidently unrelated to economic factors, we have to look elsewhere for its focal point.

There are not all that many basic relationships that can exist be-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1960) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4 •
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1



behind, but in the village world they are dormant, and do not come into play until the two worlds begin to impinge upon each other.

Thus the economic, kinship and political relationships that bind the Mbuti together as a society in the forest do not pertain in the village, and consequently the society disintegrates as such. An example can be had by comparing plans of the forest hunting camps with plans of the village camps over the same period (see Plan 2). It will be seen that there is virtually no correspondence, and that while each successive forest camp (approximately one a month) shows a significant change in structure related to the constant process of fission and fusion and of fragmentation, the village camps show no such pattern. At first they seem much more stable, but that is due at least in part to the fact that the actual camp is more permanent in nature, being occupied for much shorter periods of time. Also, such camps are sometimes built in imitation of the real villages, the houses being made smaller, though of the same semi-permanent mud and wattle construction. It is only the physical disposition that remains constant, however, and that only for as long as the physical camp remains unchanged. This may be for as long as a year or more. During that time the composition of the village camp is constantly changing, according to no discernible pattern, and certainly none related to the composition of the forest camp.

The Mbuti living in a village camp can no longer be considered as a band. Indeed, there are times when the village camp may be fully occupied, as if by a band, but in fact by Mbuti who have nothing more immediately in common than their intent to "eat" those particular villagers. Even considerations of kinship and of age break down, though nuclear families tend to continue to live together. A nuclear family will not co-operate within itself in the same way, however, as it would in a hunting camp; nor, most certainly, will it co-operate with other nuclear families. There is not even the necessity for a wife to cook her husband a meal, as he can always scrounge one from a villager. Whether he does so or not is purely a domestic issue between himself and his family and, as seen, because of the flux that pertains, different members of the same family could choose to establish village relationships, each by invoking a different context—the one *karé*, the other *kpara*, another economic exchange—so even three brothers technically "owned" by the same villager could find themselves attached to three different villagers, possibly living in three different houses (when in the village, the Mbuti sometimes

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



sleep in the *baraza* of the villagers rather than in the village camp). The nuclear family is further disrupted by the fact that a wife may well seize the opportunity of being in the village to leave her husband and visit her own *kpara* in another village.

Men and women of quite different ages who would normally, in the forest, be separated for most aspects of daily life may find themselves thrown together. Young and old are quite likely to find themselves eating together on the same *baraza*, helping to build the same house, even joining in the same erotic dance. Sex differentiations that pertain in the forest do not necessarily pertain in the village, where, for instance, Mbuti men do the housebuilding, not the women, and where the women are most effectively the "hunters" and food producers.

It is only, as stated, when the two worlds of the forest and the village impinge upon each other that the Mbuti in the village camp show any sense of identity as a unit. Those who belong to the same hunting band will then cluster together around the same campfire, and if the issue involves a return to the forest, then quickly the village camp begins to assume, so far as possible, the composition and characteristics of a forest camp. Forest relationships between individuals and families are gradually reestablished, and at the same time village relationships are gradually abandoned. This inevitably meets with concerted opposition on the part of the villagers, who offer threats and bribes to maintain the precarious and temporary relationship just established. But with no effective means of control there is nothing they can do but accept the departure of "their" Mbuti with as much good grace as they can muster. Those who are wise make presents of plantains and manioc. Those who do not are likely to have their plantations robbed.

The imminence of a mass return of Mbuti to the forest is frequently marked a night or two before it takes place by the singing in the village camp of hunting songs or, on special occasions, of the lesser *molimo* songs, late at night when all the villagers will have retired. This is a sure sign that the forest world is asserting itself, for forest songs are generally considered as sacred, and not to be profaned by performance in the village. They would never be sung in the true village, and only in the Mbuti village camp when they wish to convert the context to a forest context. The forest, it must be remembered, is physically always within sight and, perhaps more important as far as song is concerned, within earshot. It may, indeed, be no more than

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FOI



volve any reciprocal rights or obligations, the increased efficiency of each band being the reward of each.

## ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BAND AND VILLAGE

This has already been dealt with to some extent, and has been seen to involve a question of mutual convenience rather than of economic necessity. What needs to be emphasized, perhaps, is that there can in effect be an effective economic relationship only between a territorial band and a territorial village, without regard to the composition of either. The territorial village is likely to be far more consistent in composition, moving less frequently, less far and less at random than the band, and above all following a clearly patrilineal/patrilocal system of descent and marriage. Any village, then, may be said to be in an economic relationship with any hunting band whose territory includes that village. In addition, it may have a relationship with other bands whose territories are sufficiently close to allow easy exchange.

The band is similarly in relationship with a village or villages according to territorial considerations. Within that band each individual will also have personal-exchange relationships with his villager *karé* brother, with his *kpara*, and with any other individual villager in the local village if neither his *karé* nor his *kpara* are there. He may maintain any, all or none of these individual relationships as it pleases him; there is no institutional means of compelling him one way or the other from either the band or the village. He decides entirely in terms of his own needs, those of his family and the general needs of the band. If he finds himself in conflict with the band then he either forms a subsection with two or three others or he goes to visit another band. Generally, however, a band tolerates complete individualism in this respect. The obligation to share, however, does not apply to village foods. Any Mbuti who does not enter into an exchange relationship with a villager, or who does not steal what he wants, goes without unless his relatives or friends voluntarily offer him of their own.

The decision of the individual Mbuti often shows rather more forethought than is shown or called for in his other economic activities. The probable length of absence of or from his *karé* or *kpara* is taken into consideration. If an Mbuti has a particularly generous exchange partner, he will, in that partner's absence, maintain at least nominal

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



exchange with his partner's next of kin. If his partner is within a day's walk or two he may visit him briefly, bringing a suitable gift of meat with him. Even on returning to his *kpara's* village, an Mbuti may maintain exchange with a generous villager elsewhere.

There is no system of equivalents, only the obligation to reciprocate. Indeed it is doubtful if we can really even talk of it as theft when the Mbuti raid a plantation and carry off what they want, back to the forest, without leaving anything for the villagers, whom they may or may not even know. The villagers recognize their need of the Mbuti if they are to be spared the necessity of going into the forest themselves. They also recognize that the territory, even that on which the village and plantation are built, was formerly, and in a sense still is, all Mbuti territory, and that they therefore have special privileges. When a raid takes place, the established villagers assume that a reciprocal presentation of forest foods, other forest products, or of service will be made at a future date.

On the village side, *karé* and *kpara* relationships may well operate and persist over long periods of time if the individuals are wise and just. If they are not, then the same relationships, in village society, afford an institutional means of regulating the situation with any other villagers with whom the Mbuti may take up. Among the Mbuti no such considerations or mechanisms pertain.

In the latter days of Belgian administration, when increasing demands were made upon the villagers to produce certain cash crops and to supply labor, the villagers found themselves in correspondingly greater need of Mbuti labor to help them with their plantation work. Demands would be made of a whole band to come and camp near the plantation for several weeks on end, to help with the sowing or the harvesting. The demand would be made by the village chief or headman to the appointed "*capita*" or "*sultani*"[8] of the Mbuti band. Once notified, the band then decided the matter by common discussion, any dissenters being free to leave and go their own way without any attached stigma. The considerations involved in arriving at a decision were entirely practical and material, and a decision always stood ready to be reversed at a moment's notice if it was found not to be in the favor of the band.

The work entailed on the plantation in no way involved groups comparable to those formed in hunting or gathering activities; consequently in the village a different set of interpersonal relationships

[8] These terms derive from the Belgians and the Arab slave traders, respectively.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



sidered "pleasing to the forest." Asuku had placed himself, physically and morally, beyond the forest.

In the two instances cited so far, although the kin relationship of Asuku and Mbaaka to Njobo was the source of their claim to special privileges, this was recognized as a village attitude, and a valid village argument. It is noteworthy that the details of the relationship were never spelled out once, except by Asuku and Mbaaka. The attitude of all the Mbuti was one of respect for Njobo, but of equal recognition of all those who shared the same central hearth, including some who were not even affines. It was stated very clearly by Moké that though Asuku was a member of the band by virtue of having shared the same hearth, he had no more privileges than anyone else of that hearth, and was under the same obligations of respect and responsibility to his elders.

There was one other elder who could claim the same respect as Moké, by reason of age, and that was Tungana. But Moké had the added advantages of being a widower and virtually unrelated to anyone in the band. He claimed fictitious relationship with Tungana, it being said that the same foster mother fed them both, and he frequently gave Tungana's "clan" name as being his own. Clan names were seldom mentioned in disputes, except in a village context, and even then they in fact referred to a unit that was either nonlineal or cognatic, and not confined to one clan. Rather than differentiate between lineal units, the Mbuti used the concept of the hearth (*kuma*). Each family had its own hearth, but there were also several central hearths, each shared by a number of families.

Each camp, except the smallest, was distinguished by several such central hearths, effectively breaking the camp into subcamps that usually revealed a line of fission or fusion, but which frequently ran counter to all kinship considerations. As far as the Epulu band was concerned (and I believe this to be true of many other bands), authority was again, as with other aspects of life, more associated with age and territory than with kinship. Each section of the camp was, in a limited sense, a political unit, and sometimes disputes would remain confined to one section without spreading to others. A man could invoke kinship or friendship to go to the aid of a disputant in another section, if he wished, but somebody like Moké was even more free to wander wherever he liked. The rules of self-help among the Mbuti are quite simple. It is perfectly proper to hit someone with anything wooden; it is not at all proper to draw blood, nor to hit any-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



754 578 11. Sau was the mother of Amabosu, who had exchanged sisters with Ekianga. Sau was regarded by the villagers as a dangerous witch, a role she filled with zeal and which the Mbuti found useful in two ways. It provided them with a scapegoat in the forest just as it was a handy excuse for any misadventure in the village. In either situation the latent dramatic possibilities appealed enormously to the old lady's histrionic susceptibilities. One day Sau asked the wife of Mbaaka, a [535] nephew of Njobo, for some food. She was refused. That night she did a little dance in front of Mbaaka's hut, her usual way of showing [224] her displeasure. The next day, on the hunt, Masisi's son was about to run in bare-handed to catch a sharp-toothed *sindula* (chevrotain), but Amabosu persuaded him to take his spear. He did so, and then collided with Mbaaka, spearing him in the side.

There was actually some bad feeling between Amabosu and Mbaaka, and in case this was brought up (making it seem that Amabosu had deliberately caused his injury) the discussion of the incident was quickly turned to the refusal of Mbaaka's wife to give Sau food. She thus became the prime target for blame, with Sau acting as a secondary scapegoat, being criticized for dancing her "bad 578 dance" outside Mbaaka's hut. In case anyone should take it too se- 522 riously, Manyalibo promptly started making fun of Sau's dance, flap- 626 ping his hands to imitate Sau's pendent breasts. This was taken up by the children, who would not be content until Sau herself gave a demonstration.

626 That evening several hunters stood in midcamp[6] and said what a 683 good camp it was, and commented on the good hunting. No further 648 word was said about the spearing, except in the village, where the 571 respective *kpara* went to the tribunal to effect reconciliation (between 608 themselves) and blood payment. Amabosu's *kpara* agreed to pay sixty [186] francs to Mbaaka's *kpara*, Masisi's *kpara* paying only forty. This news caused great hilarity in the camp, and the comment that villagers were 626 animals, always "eating" each other. Between the Mbuti themselves I 683 could find no evidence of blood payment of any kind, though any incident involving the drawing of blood is bound to provoke discus-

[685] [157] [421] failure to share in time of need is considered a far greater crime than is petty (i.e., individual) theft.

[6] The importance of the "midcamp" position is that it defines the viewpoint of the [621] person talking. An individual talking from his own hearth talks as an individual. If he [156] talks from midcamp he is taking a band rather than an individual point of view. Similarly the *kumamolimo* is central, but more restricted in area and viewpoint, being used as a vantage point to discuss with the whole band matters pertaining to the *molimo*.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



As stated earlier, this relationship may be exceptionally cordial, and will then be maintained even if the Mbuti lineage is removed by a considerable distance from the village of its *kpara*. On the other hand the relationship may be extremely hostile, for if the Mbuti are not dealing with their *kpara*, they are certainly dealing with someone else and this causes a three-way antagonism. The *kpara*, having no political control over the Mbuti and being unable to apply any effective economic sanctions, take refuge in their belief in supernatural sanctions or else employ the local doctor to effect a curse. Their only hope of practical recompense lies in making a case against the villager with whom their Mbuti are dealing.

Insofar as the villages themselves have been tending to become somewhat divided, certain members being sent or simply going elsewhere to work, the situation is aggravated and it is difficult to assess the reasons, precisely, for the noneffectiveness of the interlineage relationship. Again the major immediate cause, though not necessarily the reason, is the fluid and composite nature of the Mbuti band, the periodic division of which may cut right across lineage divisions.

*Karé/Karé*

Male Mbuti individuals are related formally to male village individuals through the institutional *karé* brotherhood. The *nkumbi* initiations which take place periodically (every three years for the past twenty years or so, in the central Ituri) are not confined to individual villages, but draw candidates from a number of villages within the same major segment of the tribe. Frequently the *kpara* will try to see that members of their own immediate family are made *karé* to their Mbuti, but this is not always possible, and the *karé* relationship is liable to cut across the lineage relationship.

It is essentially a brotherhood pact avowing reciprocal obligations including and centering around economic exchange. But it is a more intimate relationship than can exist between the Mbuti and their *kpara*, particularly as they are related not only in terms of the knife but also in terms of age. During the period of seclusion in the initiation camp, *karé* are always expected to be close to each other, although any attempt of the one to comfort the other will be ridiculed. They are, however, frequently set tasks to perform jointly, or made to perform services for each other. A bond is begun with the knife, and may grow, under these circumstances, into a lasting friendship. It is because of this friendship, and not because of the knife, that an Mbuti may well maintain an exchange relationship with his *karé*

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



throughout his life. It is also a question of friendship with the villager, but for him the relationship is further compelled by his belief in his own tribal lore, a compulsion not felt by the Mbuti. The Mbuti sometimes exploit this relationship with a *karé* as they may also do with their *kpara* for whom they feel no friendship, knowing that the strength of tribal lore, and the fear of supernatural sanctions upon themselves, will bring at least a grudging response.

Although essentially an individual relationship rather than a band relationship, failure on the part of an Mbuti to respond to his *karé* is considered by the villagers as a violation of village law, and can be made into a lineage/lineage or a band/village issue, but with predictable lack of success because of the absence of any effective agency of control. However, the attempt is sometimes made, and the band may at least be held responsible, in violation of *karé* brotherhood, for the actions of one of its members.

None of these formal relationships, then, brings about much effective economic exchange, and the political relationship is correspondingly ineffective. The mechanisms for political relationship are there, but their use is made impossible by the whole process of flux in Mbuti society. At the best those mechanisms are taken up and used momentarily when it is found to be mutually advantageous.

*Individual Economic Relationships*

There is, however, the last level, that of the nuclear family to the nuclear family, by which the band relates to a village. This is the effective level at which the bulk of economic exchange takes place among the Epulu Mbuti, and among most other net-hunting bands I have seen. In view of the flux that characterizes Mbuti society, it is indeed the only level that could provide any realistic basis of relationship.

It may not even necessarily be a family-to-family relationship. Individual members of the Mbuti family may go their own way and relate as such to village individuals. But once formed, these relationships are likely to remain fairly constant, for as long as the Mbuti family is hunting within that territory, or within reasonable reach. Several such attachments might be formed by the Mbuti, though generally not more than one in any one village. This leads to effective economic exchange but it provides no basis whatsoever for relating the band to the village, and it offers the villagers no more opportunity for control than they already have; namely, the fondness of the Mbuti for village luxuries.

2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



for village luxuries. Bribery, indeed, may be said to be the only effective control the villagers have over the Mbuti. But it is short-lived and costly, and is on an individual or familial basis at the most. As far as internal relations are concerned, the band clearly exists as a territorial unit composed of a number of nuclear families cooperating in economic food quest. The Epulu band, and nearly all others studied, are characterized by a composite nature, negating the possibility of lineal authority. Any form of central authority is further negated by the constant changing of band composition. Leadership exists in respect to different fields at different age levels, and is nowhere centered in a single individual. Any attempt at the assumption of individual authority, or even of excessive influence, is sharply countered by ridicule or ostracism.

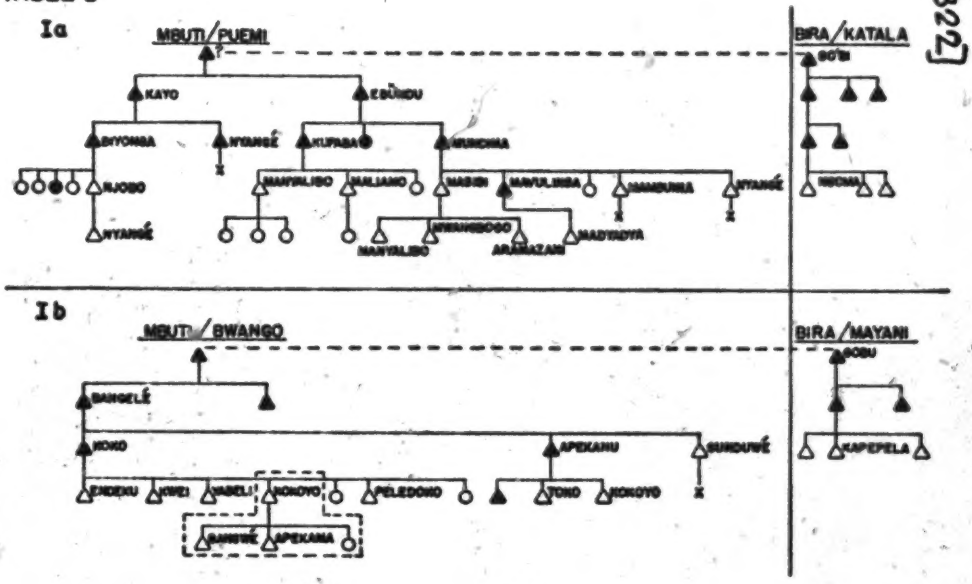
There is consequently no central leadership, in the form of an individual or even of a council, with which the centralized village leadership can deal in political terms. Nor is there any lineal leadership, let alone any stable lineal unit, with which village lineal units can relate, except in theory. The institution of *karé* brotherhood is primarily an individual relationship, and although its abuse can enlarge the relationship to a band/village level, there is again no mechanism of effective relationship at that level. Therefore the *karé* relationship, insofar as it is effective, only relates individuals.

Effective economic relationship of a stable nature can be seen to exist only between individuals or between families, determined by territorial considerations and by mutual satisfaction. The only control arises from these considerations, heightened by the Mbuti addiction to certain village foods. However, this fragments the band to such an extent that we can say the band simply ceases to exist, as such, in relationship to any village community. Neither the Chief nor the *capita* has the slightest authority or control over the band; flux renders a lineal interrelationship impossible, and we are left with no more than an agglomeration of person-to-person exchange relationships that may be economically effective but convey no political control to either side, the nuclear family being the largest effective unit, and frequently not even being that.

Mbuti
Congo - Kinshasa FO1

[P. 322]

TABLE I




*Both Ngoma and Kapapela are renowned for their affection for "their" Mbuti.*

TABLE 1a
Mbuti/Puemi: *All living members make regular prestations to Ngoma, their hereditary* kpara, *though he is permanently absent from the area. Njobo and Ngoma independently declared that Kayo's father allied with Ngoma's great-grandfather, Bo'bi. His offspring have been inherited by the senior member of Bo'bi's lineage since, and still recognize reciprocal obligations.*

TABLE 1b
Mbuti/Bwango: *All but Kokoyo and family, who hunt with the Epulu band, still hunt in the territory around Kapapela's village, moving, when he does, as a unit. They all claim to have been inherited from Gobu.*

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



usually are. Both Manyalibo and his wife were great humorists, and they made use of the powers of ridicule to break up some of the more serious disputes, because there is nothing that upsets a Pygmy more than being laughed at.

The oldest member of the group, a member of the same family though even more distantly related, was old Tungana, who had so many children and grandchildren that neither he nor his wife could remember all their names. Strangely enough, he was a progressive Pygmy, and whereas Manyalibo was constantly decrying the Pygmy plantation in his deep bass voice, Tungana thought it was fine. He also thought living near the village was a good thing as there was so much good food to be had for the stealing. And wasn't stealing easier than hunting? I think the truth was that poor old Tungana was getting too old to follow the hunting band with ease, and he was afraid of being abandoned. In fact, he often remained behind in the village when the rest were far off in the forest, and one of his many sons would come in every few days bringing the old couple gifts of meat and forest fruits.

Moke was another of the elders. He claimed a fictional relationship with Tungana because it made him feel at home, since he had no real relatives in the group other than his own children. Moke was the greatest traditionalist of all, and when the Pygmy plantations were mentioned in front of him he just laughed dryly to himself and smiled his toothless smile, saying he had not tasted any Pygmy bananas yet, but if any grew then he would be glad to eat them. It was Moke who had come with Kolongo and Njobo to cut the marks on my forehead three years earlier. Kolongo had been as much of a traditionalist as Moke, as indeed were all his family, particularly the wizened old mother, Balekimito, and his oldest sister, Asofalinda, who was now a widow and thoroughly enjoying her freedom. Moke had thought of her as a companion for his old age, but Asofalinda liked life as it was, so Moke was still a widower and she a widow.

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any culture of their own. If the facts were what they seem to be these observations might hold water, but the real facts are very different.

During my visit to Epulu in 1954, I had the good fortune to stumble quite accidentally upon fresh information, which almost completely reverses the picture. At that time I was present at an nkumbi, which I have already mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, but which merits more detailed description.

Three years had then elapsed since the previous nkumbi, in 1951, and it was time for another. The purpose of the ceremony is not only to fit village boys for adult life, making them full members of the tribe, but also to ensure the continuity between the past, present and future life of the tribe; between the living and the dead. To the villagers the dead, the ancestors, are just as important as the living, and in many ways more so; and only those who are initiated will join the ancestors when they die. Just as it is important to have a thriving, populous tribe of the living, so is it important to have a thriving, populous tribe of the dead. The dead are, in fact, living—but in another world. Regular initiations are essential to ensure the continued growth of that far-off tribe of ancestors. I have even seen a young boy who had been due to enter the nkumbi but who died just before it took place, circumcised and accorded full initiation rites before burial, just as though he were alive. In this way he was able to go to join his fathers.

In 1954 there was a unique situation. There was only one village boy of the right age for initiation (usually between the ages of eight and twelve in this area), and his father was a Christian who refused to allow the boy to participate. Every pressure was brought on the family, but to no avail. There were eight Pygmy boys of suitable age, and normally there would have been at least as many villagers. They would all have been initiated together but in such a way as to make clear the inferior status of the Pygmies. One of the initial acts is the circumcision of the boys, and a Pygmy boy is sent first "to clean the knife."

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the knife." Then follows a village boy, and these two are bound together by an indissoluble bond, the bond of *kare* blood-brotherhood. They are mutually obligated to help and care for each other for the rest of their lives. This of course helps to reinforce practical and economic links between the two people, as a Pygmy theoretically would be unable to refuse meat to his kare and the kare could not refuse any demand for plantains, manioc or rice.

But this year the villagers were faced with the alternative of having no initiation at all, or having one for Pygmy boys alone. As the initiation of a Pygmy gives him only partial rights, since he is not a full member of the tribe, a Pygmy initiate can never take a leading part in the nkumbi; all the cutting and all the formal teaching, and certainly all the ritual acts, can be performed only by a qualified villager. So it meant that the villagers would have to go through all the work and expense purely for the Pygmies. There could be no question of not holding the nkumbi, as this would offend the ancestors. And in any case the villagers decided it was worth while as it helped to assert their authority over the Pygmies. I heard speculative talk more than once about how an initiated Pygmy, when he dies, goes to serve the tribal ancestors just as he served the villagers during his life.

The *makata* sticks were cut and brought out. These are a series of sticks used only at the time of the nkumbi; each one is cut to a different length and tuned to a definite pitch. Some eight or nine men, each with a stick under his left arm, tapping it with a shorter stick held in the right hand, dance around the village playing a complicated but tuneful rhythm, the different notes overlapping and combining. Villagers from the surrounding area congregated at Epulu, some of them from as far as fifty miles away, and dancing and feasting went on for over a week. During that time the boys were collected together, and last-minute appeals were made for young Yusefu, the Christian boy, to be allowed to join. His father settled

133 rolling hills are separated by perennial streams never more than a few miles
[312] apart. A pygmy can find water almost anywhere within a hundred yards.

## Negro-pygmy Relations

433
439
361
177

This forest is inhabited by two kinds of people, Negroes and pygmies, who maintain an almost symbiotic relationship, based on trade. A Negro village may own approximately 100 square miles of forest territory. In this territory are the Negro village and the pygmy village. The former is permanent, in a clearing; the latter is temporary, under the forest trees. In maintaining their relationship, it is the pygmies' job to take in honey and meat, while the Negroes' obligation is to give them plantains. In addition, the pygmies may bring in a certain amount of wild baselli fruit in season, or roofing leaves, or rattan and fibers for net making; in return they may acquire ax blades, knives, and arrowheads from the Negroes.

There is no strict process of barter involved, and no accounting kept, other than through general observation. If the pygmies are stingy, their Negroes will hold back their bananas. If the Negroes are stingy, the pygmies will leave the territory and go to live with other pygmies serving other Negro hosts.

608
571
177

This relationship is interfamilial, between a pygmy family and a Negro family. It is a matter of close personal relations, inherited, on both sides, from father to son. These alliances may change from time to time, but when they do there are usually hard feelings; if a man's pygmy leaves him to serve another host it is a kind of divorce. In the old days, a frequent cause of intervillage warfare among the Negroes was the luring away of each other's pygmies.